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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001695

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R, R/MR, I/RW, I/REC; PA, SA/PPD

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Nepal insurgency

"Talks and no talks"

Editorial in the pro-India "Himalayan Times" (E/D, 8/24):
"If the developments since Sher Bahadur Deuba became the prime minister nearly three months ago are any guide, the peace process is nowhere near being started despite claims to the contrary. The cabinet meeting late last week concluded that it was the lack of seriousness on the Maoists' part that has prevented the talks from taking place. The CPN-UML, the largest constituent of the coalition, had joined the government with its one point agenda of restoring the peace through talks. But the other day its deputy prime minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari warned that the government would come down hard on the Maoists, referring to their actions like the present blockade."

"On the contrary, the rebels and certain political quarters, including the parties in the `anti-regression movement,' have alleged that the government has paid only lip-service to the peace talks but has in fact been bent on further militarization. For example, they point to the lack of any confidence-building measures being taken by the government as well as to its stand that any political settlement has to be within the existing constitutional framework. The government's attitude and the Maoists' blockades, shutdown of business firms and violence do not seem to give any sign of hope. Moreover, the government has not thought it necessary to explain to the people what proposal it had put forward, what stand the Maoists had taken, and why the peace process has not got off the ground."

"On their part, the Maoists seem unwilling to come to the negotiating table unless they receive a positive indication from the establishment in favor of a constituent assembly, their central demand. In fact, talks for the sake of talks hold no meaning, except raising the public expectations, only to be punctured soon afterwards. Moreover, the government may have been unable to convince the rebels that it has the authority to grant constituent assembly and then implement the agreement. Meanwhile, conflicting statements from ministers - for example, one says that secret consultations with the rebels are on, another says no such consultations are taking place, and still another says something entirely different - have only given the impression that the government is confused at best. But, for a lasting peace, there does not seem to be a better alternative to seeking a solution even if it means going beyond the existing legal framework, provided that it is democratic. Then only will it be clear whether the Maoists are sincere about their stands."

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